

Fiscal Year
2005
*Annual
Report*

Office on Asian and
Pacific Islander Affairs

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In FY05, the Office on Asian Pacific Islander Affairs (OAPIA) made tremendous efforts to engage various Asian and Pacific Islander (API) ethnic groups to keep abreast of their needs and concerns and acted as an effective bridge between the government and the community. This was achieved through extensive outreach, advocacy and interagency coordination efforts. Throughout the year, OAPIA worked closely with dozens of community-based organizations, participated in hundreds of community events, and visited thousands of individual residents and merchants. OAPIA was able to involve a record number of API residents and organizations in different government events and proceedings.

OAPIA also worked effectively to ensure that a full range of health, education, employment, social services and business information, programs and services are accessible to the API community in DC. Toward that goal, OAPIA organized and facilitated many meetings, programs and workshops on public safety, human rights, economic development, housing, employment, social services, public health, transportation, education, and multicultural development. In addition, OAPIA stepped up its communication efforts with API community through an extensive listserv, a monthly e-Newsletter, and city service brochures in which information was tailored for and translated into Chinese, Korean, and Vietnamese. Different ethnic media was also utilized to help educate the community about available services and programs.

Aiming to ensure that the API residents with limited English proficiency (LEP) have equal access to the city's services, OAPIA has been one of the lead agencies in developing, coordinating and monitoring the implementation of the Language Access Act in the District. OAPIA also provides consultation and support to government agencies in their efforts to address the needs of LEP community.



INTRODUCTION

The Office on Asian and Pacific Islander Affairs (OAPIA) serves as a liaison office between the Mayor and the growing Asian and Pacific Islander (API) residents. OAPIA's mission is to advise the Mayor and work in collaboration with government agencies on issues affecting the API community and improve access to government services and programs in areas of health, education, employment, and social services for API residents.

The API population as a minority group may have been underserved historically due to the lack of cultural and linguistic barriers to access government programs and services. The 2000 Census shows that 18,741 APIs of about 20 ethnic groups lived in the District, the largest ethnic group being the Chinese followed by the Asian Indian, Filipino, Vietnamese, Japanese, and Korean. Data shows that more than a fifth of District APIs live below the federal poverty line and 30% of APIs have limited English Proficiency (LEP), which invariably impedes APIs from accessing to government services and programs.

OAPIA works to increase access through three approaches: Advocacy, Community Outreach, and Interagency Coordination. These three major activities collectively involve engaging the API community, educating the community on government services and programs, improving access for APIs by working with DC agencies, and bringing public awareness on the API needs.



ADVOCACY

The advocacy role OAPIA plays for the API community is to promote awareness and civic participation of the community through needs assessments, multicultural activities, and neighborhood engagement.

NEEDS ASSESSMENT

In the summer of 2005, OAPIA commissioned a survey to assess the level of parental involvement by Chinese immigrant parents in selected District of Columbia Public Schools. The survey found that there was inadequate parental involvement by Chinese immigrant parents in their children's academics in the District of Columbia Public Schools (DCPS). The study concluded language/cultural barriers and the parents' inflexible work schedule were major reasons for the lacking parental involvement. The study was presented to the Superintendent of DCPS with a set of recommendations.

OAPIA developed a brief using data from the Census 2000 as part of OAPIA's initiative to make data on the Asian population in the District readily available. The report outlined statistics on the Asian population in the areas of income and poverty, education, immigration, citizenship, English proficiency, and unemployment. The four page report included a breakdown by ethnicity and a comparison of the population with the 1990 population. The report highlighted Asian population being comprised mainly of foreign-born individuals from a multitude of ethnic backgrounds. In comparison to the total D.C. population, Asians in D.C. earned lower incomes, experienced higher rates of poverty, and faced greater language barriers.

ASIAN HERITAGE CELEBRATION

OAPIA organized the Mayor's Annual Asian Heritage Month Celebration in May to continue promoting API culture and heritage. The event attracted more than 300 community members from all over the city. Talented Asian performers representing diverse ethnic backgrounds showcased their talents and traditions. API youths were awarded for their active civic participation and community members were recognized for their outstanding service to the community. The celebration was also highlighted by the Information Fair during the day when 37 government agencies and private firms provided information and services for LEP residents including translated materials, legal counseling, and health screening services.



OAPIA engaged APIs to attend the Asian Heritage Month Celebration.



NEIGHBORHOOD ENGAGEMENT

OAPIA engaged the community on a regular basis by hosting and promoting a number of events that were population or service specific. For example, OAPIA hosted a Job Fair for people with bilingual skills and immigrants with limited English Proficiency (LEP) in April 2005, which attracted 300 residents from D.C., Virginia, and Maryland. Co-sponsored by the Department of Employment Services (DOES) and the Office of Personnel (OCP) and participated by more than 40 government and private entities, the Job Fair catered to a wide audience in the Asian and Pacific Islander community to connect them with appropriate job opportunities. The Job Fair also offered concurrent workshops on resume writing, interview process, and how to use the District's online application tool. The simultaneous interpretation provided by OAPIA helped many LEP participants gain a better understanding of the job market and employment qualifications.



Various District agencies participated at the Information Fair to provide vital information to the API residents.



OAPIA invited different private corporations to participate in the Bilingual Job Fair.



The Commission on Asian and Pacific Islander Affairs (CAPIA) swearing in ceremony was held during the May Asian Heritage Month Celebration.



More than 300 APIs came from different parts of the metropolitan region to participate at the Bilingual Job Fair organized by OAPIA.



Community Outreach

OAPIA strived to reach out and educate both the API residents and merchants about District's programs and services through constant neighborhood visits and organized events such as job fairs, youth workshops, merchant workshops and conferences. OAPIA also developed translated materials that were used to distribute to merchants and empower them with information that is helpful for their business. OAPIA also assisted many LEP residents and merchants in various cases ranging from crime victims' assistance to business compliance issues.

RESIDENT OUTREACH

OAPIA organized events that were all geared towards empowering the API residents of the city. The Safety Workshop organized in the Columbia Heights neighborhood provided opportunity for API residents to know their local Police Service Area (PSA) and have information such as reporting domestic violence, emergency preparedness and , crime victim compensation. As mentioned earlier in the Advocacy section, OAPIA organized an Information Fair in conjunction with the Mayor's annual Asian and Pacific American Heritage Month Celebration in May. Agencies from local and federal government as well as community-based organizations answered inquiries and had organized booths to provide useful information on available free services to the community.

In September of 2005, OAPIA co-sponsored with BB&T Bank to bring a Homeownership Bus to Chinatown residents. The bus had computer terminals that were available for visitors to use to search for information such as home buying, mortgage, and credit scores.. All services were available free of charge to the residents.

YOUTH OUTREACH

OAPIA believes that empowering the youth today helps make them responsible adults of tomorrow. Thus, OAPIA created a platform to motivate and engage API youths by organizing several workshops and other programs for API youths who often faces issues such as language barriers, cultural alienation, peer pressure, and gang involvement.

In 2005, OAPIA organized two youth events that engaged the API youths. The Asian Pacific



Domestic Violence Resource Project shared information with Vietnamese residents on how to report domestic violence crimes during the Safety Workshop.

Islander Youth Sidewalk Chalk Contest attracted over 80 youth from the Washington Metropolitan area that gathered together at the Martin Luther King Jr. Library entrance to showcase their creative talents by drawing pictures on the sidewalks. The theme of the contest was "Peace". Youth groups from Asian American LEAD, Chinatown Service Center, Boat People S.O.S. and Vietnamese Community Service Center came to participate at the event.

The Youth Gang Violence Prevention Workshop engaged 30 API and African youth in a lively discussion about youth gang violence and provided tips on alternate forms of social activities.



The Asian Pacific Islander Youth Sidewalk Chalk Contest attracted more than 80 API youth.

MERCHANT OUTREACH

One of the many highlights of FY2005 for merchant outreach was the launching of a Korean radio show. OAPIA worked regularly on developing the program contents and hosting the show every Tuesday afternoon. The show is aired on WDCT AM radio station and is heard by numerous merchants in the Metro DC area. OAPIA utilized the casual discussions of the show and by answering phone questions to provide API merchants current information on DC regulations.

In 2005, OAPIA also visited 603 API merchants from different wards of the city with police officers from the Asian Liaison Unit (ALU). During these visits, translated OAPIA merchant brochures were distributed. OAPIA also took this opportunity to listen and discover possible issues or concerns in the community.

OAPIA also provided case assistance to residents and followed up with agencies and other parties involved. Some of the cases were issues relating to safety, littering, business zoning, liquor license,, cigarette tax stamps and others. OAPIA's outreach team has language capacity that enabled them to serve APIs effectively.

In 2005, OAPIA had also organized several agency meetings with the Department of Consumer and Regulatory Affairs (DCRA), Office on Tax and Revenue (OTR), and Metropolitan Police District Commanders. In these meetings, OAPIA shared with government representatives the issues that the merchant community are facing, and provided relevant information.

OAPIA organized two informational workshops for the API merchants - Florida Market Workshop and



API Business Conference. OAPIA organized the Florida Market Workshop in Ward 5 to respond to the growing concerns and questions from the API merchants regarding the development of the area. Ward 5 Councilmember Orange and representatives from the Office of Planning came to speak about various revitalization plans and collected inputs from the merchants who attended the workshop. There were more than 30 merchants from the surrounding neighborhoods who came to the workshop.

“OAPIA organized the Florida Market Workshop to respond to the growing concerns and questions regarding the development of the area.”

In September, OAPIA organized a two-day Business Conference for the API merchant that focused on starting and operating specific businesses such as liquor and grocery stores, restaurants and carry-outs, and dry cleaning services. Speakers from different government agencies were also invited to share information on DC market trends, DC licensing and registration, and financial resources for new business owners, and etc. After the workshops, participants were provided the opportunity to network among each other.

COMMUNICATION

OAPIA was able to disseminate information on government programs, services, and mayoral activities to over four thousand constituents in the API community through various outreach mechanisms. OAPIA was able to increase subscription establishing rapport with ethnic media and disseminating the information to residents with limit-



OAPIA organized the API Business Conference to empower more APIs with information that are relevant to operating business in the District.

ed English proficiency.

E-Newsletter: OAPIA circulates a monthly e-Newsletter entitled "The API Connection" in highlighting events of the month, upcoming community events, funding resources, and various job opportunities pertaining to the API population in the DC area. The e-Newsletter is also posted online at www.apia.dc.gov for public access.

OAPIA Brochure: A tri-fold pamphlet was generated in an effort to publicize OAPIA programs and contact information. The OAPIA Brochure was translated into Chinese, Korean, and Vietnamese languages for the convenience API residents' convenience.

List-serv: Through modern technology, OAPIA regularly e-mails API constituents with interesting educational opportunities and information on District services.



INTERAGENCY COORDINATION

OAPIA was involved with issues on language access since the spring of 2000 when Mayor Williams instructed the DC Office of Personnel to conduct a language survey to assess 14 agencies' abilities to provide equal access to services by limited English proficient (LEP) residents which resulted in the formation of the Mayor's Asian and Pacific Islander Initiative and Latino Initiative. Alongside the Office of Latino Affairs (OLA), OAPIA spearheaded the initiative of language access issues in the District, focusing on the Asian and Pacific Islander populations. In spring 2004, Mayor Williams signed the Language Access Act and OAPIA's role in language access was set on a new direction.

At the beginning of FY05, OAPIA entered a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Office of Human Rights (OHR) defining its role as a consultative body to collaborate with the Language Access Director and the Director of OHR to develop, update, and monitor the implementation of the covered entities' Language Access plans according to the provisions set forth in the Language Access Act. The efforts agreed upon by OAPIA included the areas of data collection, outreach, quality control and the hiring of bilingual Public Contact Positions and conducting multicultural sensitivity training. Beyond the scope of the MOU, OAPIA sought to support agencies in their efforts to address the needs of LEP communities. Additionally, OAPIA's underlying objective was to increase the capacity of an agency's ability to address the needs of the LEP community.

In FY05, OAPIA employed a variety of programs and activities to address the aforementioned areas. In the area of data collection, OAPIA com-



Different API community based organizations to participate at the Information Fair to share information about their services.

plied Census 2000 data into a brief on the Asian community in the District. In the upcoming year OAPIA looking to compile a similar brief for the Chinese, Korean and Vietnamese communities in the District. While data collection remains an integral aspect of OAPIA's involvement, most of the efforts focused on providing quality control on Asian language translated documents, support to agencies in outreach to the API community, and guidance on bilingual hiring and recruiting.

OAPIA, in conjunction with OLA, developed a quality control mechanism for the review and evaluation of translated documents. OAPIA contracted a community-based organization to conduct the Vietnamese quality control and evaluated documents in Korean and Chinese documents in-



house, sampling over 150 documents. OAPIA provided recommendations to agencies on how to improve translation quality.

As part of our agency's activities, OAPIA conducts regular outreach to the API community on city services. This past year, OAPIA also concentrated on educating District agencies on how to perform outreach to the API community, thus connecting the community with specific individuals in the various agencies. Recently, OAPIA conducted an Outreach Session that provided concrete accounts from the API community and provided OAPIA's own outreach experiences of effective outreach methods.

OAPIA also coordinated numerous public meeting with agencies through visits, roundtable discussions, or informational briefings. This past spring, OAPIA organized an Information and Health Fair for all District Agencies to showcase their programs and services specifically for the API community at the Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial Library. On a similar note, OAPIA also hosted a

Bilingual Job Fair at the library which attracted hundreds of bilingual API applicants. OAPIA's goal for this job fair was to provide District agencies support network to recruit bilingual staff, as mandated by the Language Access Act.

Over the past year, OAPIA continued to address language access issues in its new founded capacity. By working with agencies and forming a strong partnership with OLA and OHR, OAPIA was able to set the groundwork for the upcoming years.



OAPIA organized the Bilingual Job Fair to help API residents, especially those with limited English proficiency to find employment.



CONCLUSION

Fiscal Year 2005 was another fruitful year for OAPIA in terms of community civic participation and assisting residents with limited English in accessing city services. While remaining committed to performing outreach to the growing API community and uplifting the quality of life, OAPIA continues to work in support of community-based organizations as they strive to increase their capacity of services and access to funding so that they may continue to provide vital services for many underserved residents. As the District becomes increasingly diverse, OAPIA will continue to bridge the gap between the people in need and the available services/resources. By working with the City Council, District agencies, and community-based organizations, OAPIA hopes to fulfill our city's promise of serving all its residents, regardless of cultural or language barriers.

